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AID/W FOR DCHA/FFP; DCHA/OFDA
BANGKOK FOR OFDA TDOLAN
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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA - DCHA/FFP MONITORING REPORT ON WORLD FOOD
PROGRAM (WFP) PROTRACTED RELIEF OPERATION

¶1. (U) Summary: From July 7 - 13, 2007, USAID/DCHA Food for Peace Asia Team Leader (FFP/TL) Matthew Nims and USAID/DCHA Food for Peace Officer Katey Schein (FFP/O) visited Sri Lanka to monitor the WFP Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) which receives U.S. Title II Emergency Assistance. During the visit, FFP/TL and FFP/O visited multiple sites and discussed future funding contribution possibilities with the mission and WFP.

¶2. (U) FFP/TL and FFP/O traveled with WFP and USAID Sri Lanka staff to Trincomalee and Batticaloa to: monitor internally displaced persons (IDP) and recent returnee general food distributions; meet with local government officials; visit WFP warehouse and distribution centers; observe returnee arrival process; speak with maternal child health beneficiaries; observe school feeding activities; and discuss the current humanitarian situation with UN and INGOs. In Colombo, the team met with representatives from the Ministry of Nation Building, Estate Infrastructure and Development (NBEID) in Colombo to discuss food security and the WFP operation. End Summary

¶3. (U) Background: WFP implements a PRRO in Sri Lanka that has provided assistance to over 1 million persons since 2005. The PRRO includes the following components: vulnerable group feeding, food for work, mother child nutrition and food for education. USAID/DCHA/FFP contributed 5 million USD to the WFP PRRO in May 2007. The in-kind donation of lentils, vegetables oil and wheat flour will arrive in country in August. FFP is in the process of making a second contribution to the WFP operation.

TRINCOMALEE

14. (U) The team traveled with WFP to an IDP center to observe food distributions to populations affected by the ongoing civil conflict.

The camp manager is doing an impressive job coordinating the assistance from various NGOs and government offices. Reports were very well maintained. The camp was well organized into volunteer groups where the members of the camp would organize various activities, i.e., sports for children.

15. (U) The team visited the Trincomalee WFP regional distribution center. As the major wheat processing plant for Sri Lanka is located in the port of Trincomalee, WFP uses Trinco as a base from which to distribute the wheat flour to the operations throughout Sri Lanka. Most of the time, the processes and procedures WFP has developed with the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) enable smooth transportation of commodities throughout the country, despite the numerous military checkpoints. However, WFP and the GSL are working to further improve the systems in place.

16. (U) The team observed a returnee arrival process in Eachchilampattai Division as IDPs who had left Vaharai in Batticaloa were returning via ferry and going through the identification process. Part of this process included a distribution of a two week ration of food aid from the GSL per person in the household. After the two weeks, WFP will provide further rations for the returned families for a time period still to be determined.

BATTICALOA

17. (SBU) The team met with local Muslim fishermen whose livelihoods have been severely affected by the conflict. The men described the

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negative impact of the restrictions on the times and locations they are permitted to fish. Further, members of the Karuna paramilitary group have been engaging in extortion of businesses and control of the fish markets.

18. (U) The team spoke with IDPs who were receiving WFP food aid and staying in local churches. The majority of the IDPs were women and elders as most of the young men and children had left the area temporarily to live with families in other districts. Some expressed concerns that the fighting would resume and force them to leave again; others were looking forward to returning home. All had received sufficient commodities from the recent WFP distribution.

19. (U) The team visited a World Vision (WV) general distribution facility. WV was coordinating well with WFP and the GSL in filling gaps in food aid distributions and ensuring the needs of the beneficiaries were being met.

110. (U) The team visited two large IDP camps that have been in operation for months and witnessed the distribution of flour, vegetable oil, sugar and lentils. The operation was running very efficiently.

111. (U) The team visited and spoke to representatives from a community that had recently returned. They were satisfied with the food commodities, but expressed significant concerns regarding safety and the lack of livelihood opportunities given the numerous land mines that prevented planting of crops.

112. (U) The team co-hosted a dinner with INGOs and UN agencies that are operating in Batticaloa. FFP found it very informative to hear what other activities were ongoing and to understand how the international community works together and assists each other.

113. (U) The team visited a principal WFP warehouse and watched commodities being loaded into trucks for delivery. The warehouse was well maintained and sanitary. WFP had taken sufficient precautions to ensure the drivers were protected while in the district.

114. (U) The team visited a maternal child nutrition center and the end use distribution of commodities for pregnant and lactating

mothers and young children in a local co-op. The co-op also stocked additional, basic household commodities.

¶15. (U) The team witnessed a school feeding distribution of rice and dahl for both the local children attending the traditional school and to IDP children who were attending a temporary school.

COLOMBO

¶16. (U) On July 12, 2007, FFP, USAID mission and WFP attended a meeting in Colombo with representatives from the MNBEID. The main issues raised were as follows:

(a) (U) Food aid should never be used as a political tool; transparency and accountability must be maintained through proper monitoring and reporting; and WFP must have continuous access to beneficiaries. The donors hold WFP accountable, but as the implementing agent, MNBEID must help WFP meet these standards.

(b) (U) Collaboration between WFP and the government at a local level is good but there is room for improvement. In Trincomalee, it

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was reported that food had been delayed, distributed in insufficient rations and sometimes used in incorrect ways. Dispatch levels here could be much higher if collaboration is strengthened, including through enhanced logistics and transport. GSL representatives explained the government is taking several measures to improve program implementation, including the adoption of new guidelines on good governance, transparency and accountability.

(c) (U) WFP operations must increasingly focus on emergencies. Resources from USAID/FFP will be earmarked for the emergency component of the PRRO and not development activities in areas not affected by the conflict.

(d) (U) Logistics collaboration needs to be strengthened - WFP is the lead United Nations agency for logistics and the government should draw on its expertise and experience. This can include joint approval of dispatch plans, guidelines on running of warehouses, etc. This is a priority for USAID; forthcoming large contributions of wheat, oil and lentils from USAID/FFP will put strain on an already stretched system, furthering the need to increase the logistical capacity of WFP.

¶17. (U) Conclusion: FFP is supportive of the WFP operation in Sri Lanka and recommends a future FFP contribution to the PRRO in FY07 to address the acute needs of the conflict affected persons in Sri Lanka.

BLAKE